

LOVE
LOVE

FRED HENRICUS

FREDERICK HENDRIK MAKES HIS NAME

THE SIEGE OF GROLLE

In the summer of 1627, the young Republic of the Seven United Provinces was at war with Spain again. It had been six years since the ending of a twelve-year truce (the *Twaalfjarig Bestand*). In 1625, the Spanish regained the strategic city of Breda. On top of Spanish involvement in the Thirty Years' war, this operation had exhausted funds, as Dutch privateers were denying the Spanish a portion of their gold and silver shipments from the Americas. To solve these financial struggles, the Spanish decided to sit tight on the front in the Low Countries.

By Abe Butter

With no Spanish preparations for offensive action, the troops, supplies, and money being held in reserve for counterattacks and defensive operations by the Dutch Republic were now available for offensive action. After some deliberation, the fortified city of Groenlo, or Grolle as it was known, was picked as a target. Its strategic value was evident, for Grolle lies in the eastern part of the Netherlands near the German border.

Frederick Hendrick, commander-in-chief of the Republic's forces (the stadtholder, or in Dutch *stadhouder*; the army was called the States Army or *Staatse leger*) was to take Grolle with 168 companies (approximately 16000-17000 men) and 110 squadrons of cavalry (about 3800 men), and 75 cannons of varying calibers. The States Army was comprised of companies of Dutch soldiers, but also of Scottish, English, French, German, and Walloon companies.

Grolle was defended by a garrison of 1200 infantry and 100 cavalry, not counting civilians that would help out during the fight. Furthermore, the city was equipped with 16 cannons, had recently had its walls reinforced, and was amply supplied with food

Etching of Prince Frederik Hendrik at the Siege of Grolle, by an anonymous artist. Date ca. 1627 and now in the collection of the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.





Dutch Republicans advance to meet a Spanish sally from Grolle.

and grain. The commanders of the city were Dutch royalist (i.e. they were loyal to the Spanish king), as were the troops garrisoned there.

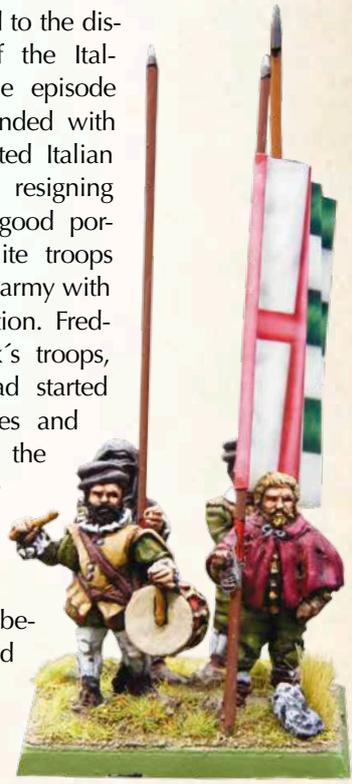
When the Dutch Republic's army neared Grolle, cavalry were sent ahead at night to lock down approaches to the city and block any messages or supplies. The following morning, the main force arrived and started to surround the city. There was a small sally by the garrison cavalry on the picketing forces, but they retreated as soon as other States cavalry rode to aid their comrades. Grolle was now severed from the outside world, but Frederick was not satisfied with simply surrounding the city. The next day he immediately set about planning and directing his troops to erect field fortifications and trench-works. As was often the custom in the States Army, officers joined in with the spade to inspire the ranks, including higher-ranking officers and even Frederick himself! An engineering workforce especially hired for this purpose helped, accomplishing sconces at selected locations. Frederick had decided to split his force into three and stationed each portion in a dedicated field bastion. The bastions were connected via trenches and all kinds of earthworks interspersed with artillery positions. Frederick took the larg-

est part of the army, including French and English regiments, under his direct command in a bastion encampment to the southwest of the city. To the east was his nephew Ernst Casimir van Nassau with a portion of the army together with Scottish and German regiments. In the west, on the opposite side of Ernst, was Willem van Nassau with the remaining troops, forming the smallest of the three bodies.

Although the target of the besieging force was inside this ring of defenses, most of the besiegers' earthworks had a stronger focus on defense towards the outside of the ring. Frederick Hendrick feared a royalist relief attempt and suspected his forces might not have sufficient strength to meet royalist forces in the open, especially not the feared Spanish and Italian tercios of the Low Countries. At the end of the second day, the earthworks were all in a defensible state, and in the following days they were strengthened further.

Pretty soon word came that royalist count Hendrik van den Bergh was coming to the relief of the city, bringing with him a force of about 16000 infantry and 4200 cavalry. Acting on this information, Frederick had further earthworks added and strengthened his position even more rigorously over

the following days. Van den Bergh's relief, however, would never go the way he planned. Shortly before arriving at Grolle, the commander of the Italian segment of his forces fell out with the Spanish commander. Rivalry between the Italian and Spanish tercios was certainly not uncommon, and here, as elsewhere, the conflict between the two was intense. In addition, payment for the royalist troops wasn't very regular, and this combination almost certainly added to the disgruntlement of the Italian troops. The episode of infighting ended with a deeply insulted Italian commander resigning and taking a good portion of the elite troops (Italians) of the army with him out of action. Frederick Hendrick's troops, meanwhile, had started digging trenches and mines towards the walls of Grolle a few days after arriving, and an artillery duel between them and the defenders had also commenced. The



besiegers tried to hinder the progress as much as possible by artillery and musket fire from the walls, and by sallies. Every breach the attackers shot with so much effort, the defenders immediately filled up. By night they undertook sallies as well, trying to get messengers through to Van den Bergh to coordinate the relief attempt with forces in the city. Van den Bergh's eventual arrival from the east was signaled by him firing his cannons to let the defenders know help was near. He constructed a fortified position as well, and started to contemplate his options.

Van den Bergh didn't much feel like a frontal assault on the fortified States position, certainly not now he had lost his Italian elite force. He did, however, still have his Spanish elite troops, who excelled among other things in *camisados* (night attacks). Van den Bergh planned to assault the States fortifications with these troops at night-time at multiple points, to draw troops to the positions under attack. Then he would simultaneously force a breakthrough at the least guarded spots. That night, however, his plan was thwarted, since Frederick had moved bodies of

troops to the side from which Van den Bergh had arrived. The main royalist thrust was aimed at the encampment bastion of Count Ernst van Nassau, and heavy fighting ensued, in which the States Scottish troops particularly distinguished themselves.

Unfortunately for the garrison of Grolle and Count van den Bergh, all attempts to break through failed. The attacks on the encampment bastion of Ernst were repulsed, and all other attempts to go around strongpoints were met with new troops and re-

DUTCH ROYALIST ORDER OF BATTLE

C-in-C: Count Hendrick van den Bergh, mounted commander, rating 9

1st battalia

- Mounted commander, rating 8
- Spanish pike x 2
- Spanish musketeers x 2

2nd battalia

- Foot commander, rating 8
- Spanish halberdiers x 1 (halberds and shortened pikes were often used during night raids)
- Spanish musketeers x 2
- Spanish swordsmen x 1

3rd battalia

- Foot commander, rating 8
- Spanish snaphances x 4

SPECIAL RULES

Camisados: The Spanish troops excelled at night raids. All Spanish count as Superbly Drilled.

Unit	Type	Weapon	HtH	Sh	M	S	Special
Spanish pike	Foot pike block	Pike	6	-	3+	4	Camisados, stubborn
Spanish musketeers	Foot infantry block	Musket	4	2	3+	4	Camisados
Spanish halberdiers	Foot infantry block	Halberds	6	-	3+	5	Camisados, tough fighters
Spanish swordsmen	Foot infantry block, tiny unit	Swords & shields	4	-	3+	3	Camisados, swordsmen
Spanish snaphances	Foot infantry block	Musket	3	2	3+	3	Camisados, firelocks

HtH - Hand to hand; Sh - Shooting; M - Morale; S - Stamina

Note: Musket units are described as blocks, instead of line as per the rulebook. This is because it was the custom in this period for musket units to deploy in large blocks on the sleeves of the pike, not actual two- or three-deep lines. Blocks were many more ranks deep.

DUTCH REPUBLIC STATES FORCES

C-in-C: Count Ernst Casimir van Nassau-Dietz, mounted commander, rating 8

Scottish battalia

- Foot commander, rating 7
- Scottish pike x 1
- Scottish musketeers x 2

German battalia

- Foot commander, rating 7
- German pike x 1
- German musketeers x 2

Friesche battalia

- *Het Friesche Regiment* (the Frisian Regiment; see special rules):
- Foot commander, rating 7
- Dutch pike x 1
- Dutch musketeers x 2

Dutch battalia

Mounted commander, Frederick Hendrick, rating 9

- Dutch pike x 2
- Dutch musketeers x 4
- English pike x 1
- English musketeers x 2

Unit	Type	Weapon	HtH	Sh	M	S	Special
Scottish pike	Foot pike block	Pike	6	-	4+	4	Valiant
Scottish musket	Foot infantry block	Musket	3	2	5+	3	Valiant
German pike	Foot pike block	Pike	6	-	4+	4	
German musket	Foot infantry block	Musket	3	2	5+	3	Camisados, swordsmen
Dutch pike	Foot pike block	Pike	6	-	4+	4	Reliable
Dutch musket	Foot infantry block	Musket	3	2	4+	3	Reliable
English pike	Foot pike block	Pike	6	-	4+	4	Crack
English musket	Foot infantry block	Musket	3	2	5+	3	Crack

HtH - Hand to hand; Sh - Shooting; M - Morale; S - Stamina

SPECIAL RULES

The Frisian Regiment (3rd battalia, deployed in the bastion) was a regiment consisting of Dutch troops from the province of Friesland. Ernst Casimir was stadtholder of this province (Friesland had its own stadtholder in conjunction with the other stadtholder). The Friezen (Frisians) are loyal to their stadtholder and fight harder under his gaze. If Ernst Casimir joins the Frisian regiment they will add +1 to rally orders.



Grolle in 6mm. Spanish and Dutch forces clash.



Grolle in 15mm. Dutch forces block the supply roads.

cently erected obstacles, which were spaced at regular intervals between the fortifications of the trench line. Further reserves were placed further back between Grolle and the trench line to plug eventual gaps. The final decision fell when Frederick arrived with reinforcements from his encampment. Van den Bergh had to abort if he didn't want to lose his army, and, with the coming of the first light, the royalist forces retreated.

No further relief attempts were made. When the defenders still refused to surrender even now the relief attempt had failed, Frederick gave orders to blow a mine that had been dug beneath one of the walls. A breach was blown, but the attackers were nonetheless beaten back three times. However, the garrison could not withstand these sustained assaults for long, and lack of supplies and reserves forced them to surrender on honorable terms. Van den Bergh moved off the day after the surrender treaty was signed, and the garrison left Grolle unharmed and with colors flying.

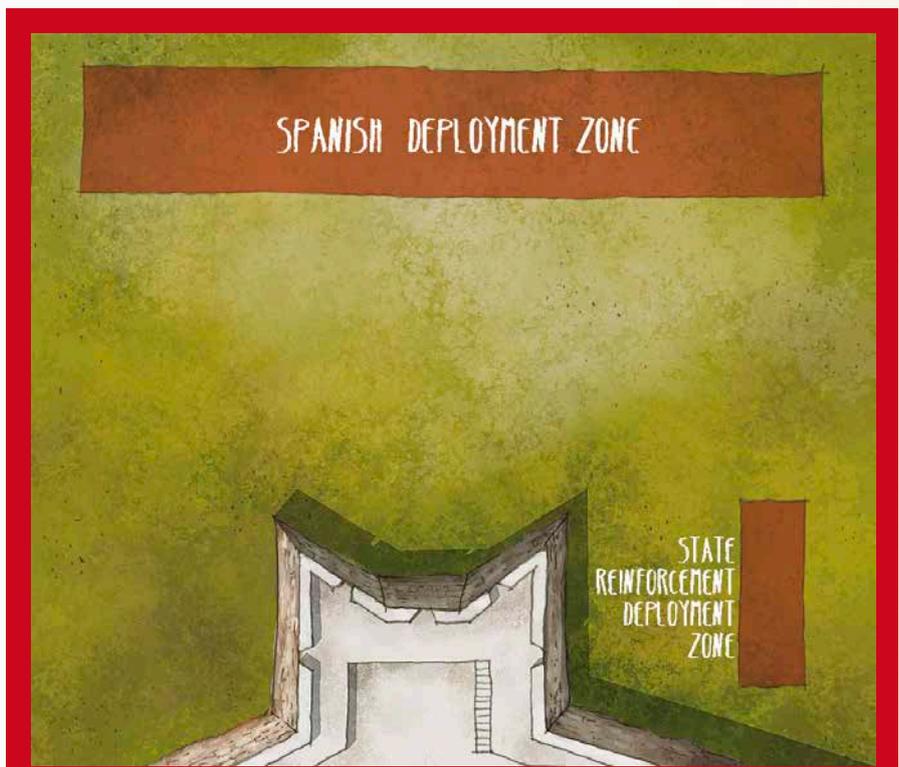
Not only did Frederick take a fortified city in a time of barely two months, he also did it while many thought the Republic didn't have the resources for it, especially not when the royalists still proved able to raise such huge relief forces. Frederick gained praise, too, for treating the garrison honorably and sparing the civilians and catholic clergy, even offering anyone who wanted to leave the chance to do so with all their possessions and

the guarantee of free passage through the province. Inhabitants could even have their possessions secured for a period of two months if no immediate transport was available, and Frederick loaned the garrison 200 carts for transport of supplies to the camp of Van den Bergh when they left! The operation gained praise as well for being logistically well executed and a prime example of successful quick-

result-delivering engineering. Frederick Hendrick had made his capabilities known, but he would continue on campaigning to show that Grolle was merely the beginning.

THE GREAT GAMBLE OF GROLLE

This scenario represents the relief attempt by Van den Bergh as it historically happened, in the form of



SET-UP

This scenario can be played on a 6 x 4 foot table. Aside from the earthworks, the terrain is a grassy flat with only decorative vegetation, no difficult terrain. The Dutch bastion is centered on one long table edge. It should preferably be around 1.5 by 1.5 feet. The States troops deploy inside the bastion, the Spanish on the opposite long table edge. The Spanish deploy in full. The Dutch deploy only the 1st, 2nd and 3rd battalia; the 4th is in off-table reserve.



Siegeworks put up by the attacking Dutch.

a night attack. The Royalist forces are the attackers, the States Army the defenders. I have included stats for Warlord's *Pike & Shotte* rules. Although it seems very implausible that Van den Bergh would have gone within close command distance during the night attack, I have included him in the list to represent him supervising the operation (since in *P&S* commanders can't be targeted individually anyway). Cavalry is left out due to the impracticality of large-scale cavalry operations in the fortified area at night. To represent the Spanish element of surprise, the troops in the bastion aren't very big battalions. The order of battle mainly focuses on the great diversity in troop nationality and character that was present in this era – a typical style of engagement for the conflict – and for players to be able to recreate this with an average-sized collection.

Special rules

- The Spanish have the first turn.
- When Frederick Hendrik enters the field, he may immediately be elected as the new and only C-in-C for the Dutch if the player wishes.

Night fighting:

- No unit can see enemy units further away than 8" outside the bastion.
- Inside the bastion, visibility is as normal, and units inside the bastion can be spotted as per normal rules, including from outside the bastion.
- Units over 6" range are counted as being +1 to hit for ranged attacks.
- Penalties for command distance are increased by one, i.e. for every unit receiving commands from a commander over 12" away, deduct 2 from the order result; over 24" deduct 3, etc.

Reinforcements:

At the beginning of the third turn, Frederick Hendrick arrives with the 4th battalia on the right board edge seen from the States side.

Ending the game

The game ends after six turns have been played.

Victory conditions

The Spanish must try to seize the bastion and hold it. If there are States troops inside the bastion at end of the 6th turn, the Spanish didn't seize

a foothold in the ring of fortifications in time and lose the game. If there are no States troops inside the bastion at the end of the 6th turn, the Spanish breached the ring of fortifications and now have a foothold towards Grolle and win the game.

ALTERNATIVES

Of course, there is more to wargame about Grolle. The defenders sallied quite a few times at night, hoping to contact the relief army. One could add them here, turning up in the back of the States troops! Or, if your collection is big enough, a 'what if' relief attempt of Van den Bergh's forces in full force might be an option, had the Italians and Spaniards not squabbled. This last scenario should be a head-on clash of two sizable armies, with the States troops entrenched but somewhat spread to keep the encirclement intact, and with the Royalist forces surging forward in full force with the elite Italian and Spanish troops in classic tercio formation waving their colors! **WS&S**

For those seeking a taste of Eighty Years' War action, the Siege of Grolle is reenacted every two years at its original location by a group of close to one thousand reenactors from around the world in a three day event.